

Summary of Survey of Conditions in HUD-Assisted Buildings

All of the surveys dealt with in this report were completed during August and September of 1993. The buildings which completed surveys were: New Hope Village, Zion Towers, Stratford Place, Carmel Towers, St. James Towers, Georgia King Village, Fairview Homes, Hallmark House and Collonades Apartments. An addendum is attached with results from Douglass-Harrison, Aspen Riverpark, Georgia King Village, and Hallmark House listed separately.

I. Elevators

All of the multi-story buildings reported problems with elevators, ranging from "Elevators not working 1/2 the time" to "All elevators out daily." People also reported other problems such as "Elevators drop while tenants are inside."

Residents reported waiting anywhere from five minutes to 1/2 hour for elevators. One person commented, "I gave up and walk the stairs" (this resident lives on the 9th floor, and now generally expects to have to walk up).

II. Heat

Many of the residents from various complexes reported serious problems with heat. Some said they had **no heat on a daily basis**. "Most of the winter we used our oven for heat," said one tenant. "I have used my oven to heat my apartment for the last several years," said another. "I have purchased electric heaters for every room," said another.

For some residents heat was not a problem.

Although the survey did not inquire about air-conditioning, a number of residents reported problems with non-working air conditioning systems, which can also be a serious problem, particularly for senior citizens or residents with health conditions.

III. Hot Water

Responses ranged from no problem, to no hot water 2 or 3 times a year, to no hot water daily. One resident reported, "have to heat water (on a daily basis) at 4:30 A.M. in order to take a shower."

IV. Vermin

Many of the tenants in different complexes reported seeing roaches and mice on a daily basis. Some residents reported paying their own exterminators. "I saw 4 mice in 1 day," one resident reported. "I see them up and down the hallways, in the compactor room, and in vacant apartments," said another. "I hear them in the walls," said still another resident.

Some residents reported seeing rats outside the buildings, in the stairways, in garbage areas, or parking lots.

Most residents reported that exterminators do come to the building, anywhere from weekly to 2 times a year. An average seems to be once a month. Several residents said they had never seen an exterminator.

V. Plumbing

This was one of the areas with the most serious problems in many buildings. Many residents reported leaks in their apartments and in their buildings, including sewer backups. "Plumbing is a constant source of leaks, plaster damage, chipping paint, and unclean water on the floor," wrote one tenant.

Most of the reported leaks were in the bathrooms and kitchens, although some were in the living rooms. One building, Carmel Towers, reported leaks in all "C line" apartments. "Water runs out of the toilet, into the closet, living room and bedroom floors. It has destroyed my carpets," reported one person. "The toilets overflow every weekend," wrote another person.

Many of the leaks have been reported to management but have not been repaired. "I have had my leaks for 1 to 2 years," wrote one tenant. "My bathroom has been repaired 17 or 18 times. In March of 1993, a leak that was 2 years old was finally fixed," wrote another person. One resident said the problem hadn't been fixed for "a few years."

VI. Common Areas

1. Leaks

Some of the buildings had leaks in the common areas. Some tenants reported leaks in ceilings, in basements, in walls and lobbies, and cracked plaster from leaks. In some cases the leaks had been there for six to 12 months, unrepaired.

2. Garbage

Although collection practices vary by building, garbage is collected from the floor daily to one to two times a week. Tenants are not always informed about pick up days.

One tenant reported large bags of garbage placed on the floor and left over a day. One building reported broken incinerator door, and smells. Some tenants complained that garbage should be picked up more frequently, since the smells attract mice.

3. Cleaning

This was an area of great concern to most of the residents surveyed. Many said that maintenance in common areas is not sufficient (meaning common areas are or look dirty). Some complained that there are not enough maintenance persons to do the job well, and that the job was done poorly by those who were working. "Nothing is done on weekends," commented one person. "The hall and yard need cleaning everyday," one tenant wrote. In some buildings, daily cleaning of common areas was done, and tenants appreciated it. Maintenance policy among the buildings does not seem uniform.

4. Painting

Residents were not satisfied on the whole with the painting of common areas. Residents said painting took place from every 2 years, to every 5 years, to "whenever the mood strikes management." One person wrote, "It looks terrible. No one should have to live like this." Residents complained of paint jobs being started but not finished. One tenant wrote, "Management's primary function is to collect rents and make a profit. It doesn't seem to be terribly interested in providing safe, decent, or affordable housing."

Although the survey did not inquire about painting inside apartments, many residents commented on that issue. "My apartment has been unpainted since 1985," wrote one resident. "Apartments should be painted regularly," said another tenant. "In 18 years, my apartment was painted 2 times," wrote another person. Others said their apartments had not been painted in 4 years, or in 8 years. Another tenant wrote, "I have to paint on my own."

5. Security

Most tenants were very dissatisfied with the security in their buildings. "My building has no security," wrote one resident. "A child could open the lock," wrote another tenant. "Security acts like a doorman," said another tenant. "They do not patrol the floors, they harass company, they hang out with drug dealers." "We need more security on weekends," said another tenant. More than one resident pointed out that there is no security provided at townhouses.

6. Repairs in Timely Fashion

Residents reported that problems reported to the office took anywhere from one week to over a year to repair. One resident reported problems which had not been fixed in 5 years. "Seems like forever," wrote one tenant. "I put in repair orders for over a year, but they're not fixed," said another person. Some residents complained that professional people were not hired to do the work.

7. Tenants Associations & Management Attitude

Some tenants have access to community rooms any time they request. Others have no access at all for meetings and functions. It seems there is no consistent practice of allowing tenants access to meeting rooms.

A number of residents said that management was supportive of Tenant Association programs. Many reported no support. Most said management gave the Tenant Association no financial support.

Most tenants said that management attitude toward tenants was "Hostile or disrespectful" (as opposed to "professional" attitude). Some reported a professional and polite attitude but failure to comply with requests ("repairs don't get done"). "(I) Make out a work order and then wait," said one resident. "Getting ignored," was how another resident described it.

VII. Tenant-Landlord Relations

Several problems with recertification were reported. One person reported receiving notices for her neighbors. Another said, "When my income was increased I was informed of the rent increase. When my income decreased I had to continuously ask why hadn't a decrease occurred in my rent."

Most tenants reported that they had not received the Truth-In-Renting Act from their landlord, that it was not posted in their building, and that a Registration Statement was not posted in their building as required by law.

VIII. Subsidy

Some residents surveyed received subsidies; some did not.

IX. Miscellaneous.

Almost all tenants surveyed said they would be willing to show their apartment and problems in common areas to HUD inspectors, and listed the best times of day for them.

Almost all said that they would be willing to help coordinate a HUD site visit to their building.

Many listed specific names of other tenants in their buildings who had problems in their apartments. One tenant wrote, "Every tenant in my building has some kind of a problem in their apartment."

Some tenants also mentioned that equipment, such as stoves, refrigerators, etc., did not work or work well. The survey did not ask about these types of problems.

Douglass-Harrison Apartments

I. Elevators - does not apply to those who answered the survey.

II. Heat - Most people who answered the survey said they had problems with heat, if not daily, than two or three times a week. "I had no heat in my bedroom all winter," wrote one resident.

III. Hot Water - Most respondents answered that they had no hot water either daily or one to two times a week. "Sometimes I have no water," wrote one resident.

IV. Vermin - All residents asked said they saw roaches daily or one to two times weekly. One resident wrote, "I see roaches all the time." Another said she also sees huge water bugs. Several tenants reported seeing mice and rats.

V. Plumbing - Two-thirds of those who answered the survey had plumbing leaks. Some leaks were in the bathroom, others in the living room, kitchen or halls. "I have leaks in my entire apartment," wrote one tenant. "The light in my kitchen gets water in the globe. It has been repaired 19 times, and is still a problem," wrote another. Another said she had leaks every time the person upstairs took a shower for years (and it is still a problem). The leaks had been there anywhere from one week to one year.

VI. Common Areas

a) Leaks did not seem to be a problem.

b) Garbage Collection was not mentioned as a problem.

c) Cleaning: Residents reported not seeing any maintenance persons ever cleaning up the hallways. "The hallway is very dirty," wrote one person. A related comment was one resident's report that there is no hallway stair railing.

d) Painting: Residents said common areas get painted every two years, but commented that when they wanted their apartments painted they had to ask for it. "I have been there 15 years and my apartment hasn't been painted," said one resident. Another tenant commented that "You can't trust their personnel to work in your apartment."

e) Security - Responses ranged from no problem, to "there is no security in this building."

f) Getting Repairs Done - Tenant responses stated that the length of time it takes to get reported problems repaired ranged from 1 month to "repairs never get done."

g) Tenants Association: Tenants all said there was no access to a community room. Nearly all said there was no support for tenant association activities.

Management Attitudes - Some residents said management's attitude toward individual tenants was disrespectful. "We are not people (to management)," wrote one tenant.

VII. Tenant Landlord Relations

No problems were reported with recertifications. Most tenants had not received the Truth-In-Renting Act. Neither the Act, nor the Registration Statement, were posted in the building, as required by law.

VIII. Some of the tenants who answered had rent subsidy, more did not.

IX. Nearly all said they would be happy to show HUD inspectors their apartment, depending on the time of day, or help coordinate a tour for HUD of the building.

Other comments: The survey did not ask about appliances. One tenant wrote about defective kitchen equipment. "My refrigerator does not work. My stove has to be kept shut with a piece of foil," she said.

Georgia King Village

I. Elevators - Tenants said elevators were out from one to two times a week, to daily, and that they generally had to wait 5 to 10 minutes for an elevator.

II. Heat - Some tenants said no problem, others said no heat once a month.

III. Hot Water - Many of the tenants who answered the survey said there was no hot water on a daily basis.

IV. Vermin - Tenants said they saw roaches daily, twice a week, and once a month. One tenant wrote, "The roaches have gotten used to the exterminating spray. You see roaches (after spraying) as if nothing happened."

Most tenants complained that they encounter mice on a daily basis. "There is a big hole in front of the building for the last three to four months, and mice are going from the hole into the building," wrote one tenant. Others said the mice were not affected by exterminating methods. The building is exterminated once a month, but one tenant wrote, "Exterminators do not help the problems that we have in our apartment for mice."

Many said they saw rats outside the building daily, or one to two times a week.

V. Plumbing - Some tenants said they had leaks in their apartment.

VI. Common Areas -

a) Leaks did not seem to be a problem.

b) Garbage is taken out twice a week from the floors, and building.

c) Tenants said the common areas were cleaned daily, which was sufficient.

d) Tenants said common areas were painted every 1 or 3 years, which was not sufficient.

e) Security - The majority of tenants who responded said more security is needed, although the townhouse residents seemed to have no problem. "We need police protection," one tenant wrote. "Security cannot go up against someone that's armed with guns," another resident commented.

f) Repairs were made in 1 week or less.

g) Tenant Association & Management Attitude - The Tenant Association has limited access to the community room, and is not given financial support by the owner/manager. A number of tenants felt the management had a hostile/disrespectful attitude toward individual tenants.

VII. Tenant-Landlord Relations

One resident commented that the "recertification process takes too long."

Most tenants said they had not received the Truth-in-Renting Act, and the Registration Statement was not posted.

VIII. Some tenants who responded had subsidies, others did not.

IX. All tenants said they would be happy to show HUD officials their apartment, or coordinate a site visit.

Miscellaneous: One tenant complained about needing a new stove. Another brought up that her daughter was on the waiting list for an apartment for 2 years. The survey did not deal with waiting list questions.

Hallmark House

The surveys Hallmark House filled out were slightly different from the survey which the other buildings used. However, the information is still very useful.

I. Elevators - One or more elevator is out every weekend, or one to two times a week.
Tenants wait 5 to 10 minutes for an elevator (10 on weekends).

II. Heat - Tenants reported no heat once or twice a week

III. Hot Water - Many tenants said they have no hot water one to two times a week; many said water pressure was weak, and hot water was not really hot.

IV. Vermin - Many tenants said they had a roach problem. Many said they had a problem with mice. Tenants said they see rats around the building on a daily basis. Tenants reported that exterminators come once a month.

V. Plumbing - Most of the tenants said they had leaks in their apartments, usually in the kitchen or the bathroom, but sometimes in the living room, the entrance way, the ceilings, and walls. Some said the leaks were causing unpleasant smells.

VI. Common Areas

- a) Leaks - It seems as if leaks are a problem in some common areas. According to one tenant, "Ever since I moved in water has been dripping into pails to catch the water."
- b) Garbage is collected daily from the floor and two times a week from the building.
- c & d) Common areas are cleaned daily, which some feel is sufficient, and painted yearly. Tenants reported no problem with painting in common areas.
- e) Security: "We need armed guards at every shift."
- f) Repairs: It can take one month to one year for reported problems to be repaired, and sometimes repairs are done poorly.
- g) Tenant Association Programs are encouraged, and the office attitude is professional.

VII. Tenant Landlord Relations

The Truth-in-Renting Act is not available (though tenants have asked for it) and the Registration Statement is posted but is not readable.

VIII. Most tenants are not on rent subsidy.

IX. The Tenant Association President said she would be happy to lead HUD officials on a tour of her apartment, and/or the building as a whole. (Individual surveys used in Hallmark House did not ask if all tenants would show their apartments to HUD officials).

Almost every tenant who answered the survey reported some problem with items which covered in the Hallmark House survey but not in the Coalition survey. For example, tenants reported ovens or stoves broken; kitchen and bathroom vents not working; floor tiles missing, soiled carpets; cracked walls; baseboards missing; holes in walls; doors that don't work; circuit breakers that don't work; missing tiles in the bathroom; broken kitchen cabinets; broken refrigerators; missing fire alarms; missing closet doors; missing screens; broken glass in the windows; leaking windows; windows which won't open; and air conditioners which don't work.

Aspen Riverpark Apartments

I. Elevators

Over 50% of the tenants who answered the survey said that the elevators did not work.

II. Heat - this question was not asked on the Aspen Riverpark survey.

III. Hot Water - Hot water was a problem for a very small number of residents.

IV. Vermin - 80% of the Aspen Riverpark tenants who answered the survey said they had a big problem with mice, roaches, and rats.

V. Plumbing - Sixty six leaks of various kinds were reported in the surveys which were answered. Many reported leaks in the bathroom around the tub or toilets (close to 60% of the leaks reported). Leaky faucets in the bathroom, and leaky kitchen sinks and faucets were reported. 30% reported leaks in the ceiling.

VI. Common Areas -

- a) There was no question about leaks in the common areas on this survey.
- b) 47% of those who responded to the survey said there was garbage in the hallways.
- c) 60% of the Aspen Riverpark tenants who answered the surveys said that their hallways were dirty.
- d) 43% of those who answered the survey said their apartment needed to be painted.
- e) 35% of those who answered the survey said that security was inadequate and the building was dangerous. 50% of those who answered said drugs were sold in the building; 45% said there was a problem with loitering in and around the building.
- f) 45% said repairs were not done in a timely fashion.
- g) 32% said that repairs were not done well.
- h) 15% said management attitude toward the tenants was disrespectful or hostile.

VII. Tenant- Landlord Relations

There was no question about recertification, and the Truth in Renting act on this survey.

VIII. Subsidy - There was no question about subsidy on the survey, however this is a Section 8 building, and tenants in all apartments pay 30% of their income for rent.

IX. Miscellaneous - The following were reported:

- a) 39% reported cracked or missing tiles in the kitchen or bathroom.
- b) 15% reported low water pressure.
- c) 28% reported broken stoves.
- d) 13% reported the smell of gas.
- e) 17% reported broken refrigerators.
- f) 43% reported broken cabinets or counter tops in the kitchen.